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S E R M O N

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PREACHED

At the PRIMARY VISITATION

OF

THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

CHARLES, Lord Bishop of NORWICH,

HOLDEN AT IPSWICH, ON TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 1794,

FOR THE DEANERIES OF IPSWICH, SAMFORD, COLNES, AND CLAYDON.

Published at the Request of the Clergy present.

By JOHN LONGE, A. M.

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1794.



TO

THE REVEREND THE CLERGY

OF THE

DEANERIES OF IPSWICH, SAMFORD, COLNES, AND CLAYDON,

THIS DISCOURSE

IS

WITH ALL RESPECT AND DEFERENCE

INSCRIBED,

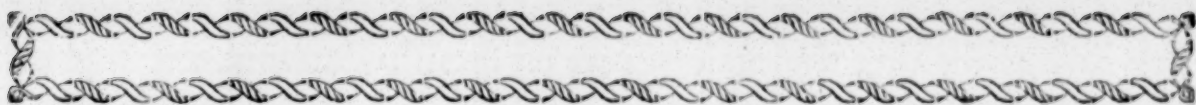
BY THEIR MOST OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THE PREACHER.

¶ The Passages included in Brackets were for the sake of brevity omitted in the delivery.

* * * The Profits arising from the Sale of this Publication will be applied to the benefit of the Blue Sleeve Charity School.





A

S E R M O N.



MARK CH. II. V. 28. THE SON OF MAN IS LORD ALSO OF THE SABBATH.

A DESIRE of Improvement seems to be congenial with the natural activity of the human mind, and, whether employed in meliorating establishments already in certain measures good, in carrying on beneficial Regulations and Usages still nearer to perfection, or in removing such defects and corruptions as they may have contracted from time and various other causes, and in restoring them to their original Purity, is undoubtedly in itself a Principle of the highest utility. But even this laudable Zeal for Reformation, being subject to the influence of human passions and prejudices, has not unfrequently been known to degenerate into, or to associate with itself, a Spirit of Innovation, which under a specious appearance of reforming, is busied in pulling down rather than in building up, in defacing rather than in beautifying, thus in the end doing harm where it professes an anxiety to do good.

OUR countryman Wickliff himself, who laid the foundation stone of the Reformation in this kingdom, was a striking instance of this infirmity or unhappy propensity of human nature. At the same time
that

that he was shaking the main pillars of Popish Tyranny and Superstition, he laboured to propagate tenets injurious to and in their tendency destructive of that very Religion for which he stood forth an undaunted Champion. Of the erroneous tenets which he professed one only is at present necessary to be mentioned. He held, that, "Provided
 "a man lives conformably to the Divine Will, Devotion neither in
 "thought nor language is required of him." Consistently with this strange position he argued against stated times for Divine Worship, and affirmed, that, "the binding people to set forms of Prayer is
 "abridging the Liberty which God hath given us^a."

ONE is almost led to recognize this Spirit of Lollardism again, as it were, reviving amongst us, when, under the profession of "*pure Zeal for the Investigation of Religious Truth, and the important cause of Moral Virtue^b*," we are told, that the Lord's Day is of no Divine

^a Collier's Church History, vol. i. p. 584.

^b See Arguments against and for the Sabbathical Observance of Sunday, by Edward Evanfon, M. A. 1792, p. 87.

There seems to be a want of candour in thus depreciating the Lord's Day, by styling the prescribed mode of observing it as to Rest, Worship, &c. *Sabbatical*. Mr. E. thus apparently confounds the observation of the Lord's Day with that of a Jewish Sabbath. A Cessation from Labour is of course the consequence of devoting a day to the peculiar purposes of Religious Worship; but yet the Rest of the Lord's Day widely differs from that enjoined upon the Jewish Sabbath, particularly in containing nothing of that Ceremonial Strictness which was the peculiar Cha-

rafteristic of the latter Institution. St. Ignatius makes this important distinction in his Epistle to the Magnesians, where addressing himself to the Judaizing Christians, he says; Μη πλανασθε ταις ἑτεροδοξίαις, μηδὲ μυνεύμασιν τοῖς παλαιοῖς ἀνωφελεσιν ὄσιν. Ἐἰ γὰρ μὴ καὶ νῦν κατὰ νομὸν Ἰουδαϊσμὸν ζῶμεν, ὁμολογῶμεν χάριν μὴ εἰληφέναι. — Ἐἰ ὅν ἐν παλαιοῖς πρᾶγμασιν ἀναστρέφοντες, εἰς καινότητά ἐλπίδος ἦλθον, μὴκέτι σαθεύοντες ἀλλὰ κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες, ἐν ᾗ καὶ ἡ ζῶν ἡμῶν ἀνετείλει δι' αὐτοῦ, καὶ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ, ἐν τινὲς ἀρετῆς. δι' ἃ μυστηρίου ἐλάβομεν τὸ πιστεῦναι, καὶ διὰ τῆτο ὑπομενομεν ἵνα εὐρεθώμεν μαθηταὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ μονοῦ διδασκαλοῦ ἡμῶν. πῶς ἡμεῖς δυνησομεθα ζῆσαι χωρὶς αὐτοῦ; Ignat. Ep. ad Magn. Sect. viii.—ix. See also Bingham's Antiq. Chr. Church, B. xx. c. 2. f. 3.

Authority

Authority, but a Device either of Superstition or human Policy ; of no advantage to Religion, but on the contrary, productive of Disorder and Libertinism, and prejudicial to the interests of Civil Society.

IN the different ranks of Life many are to be found who have neither the leisure, the opportunity, nor perhaps the inclination to inquire seriously into the Truth or Fallacy of every new opinion which is advanced, nor to examine with diligence and accuracy the grounds upon which these Speculations in Religion are built. People of this description, therefore, are most liable to be seduced from the plain and simple paths of the Gospel, and to be unwarily captivated by a Theory which perhaps may chance to harmonize with some favourite Prejudice, or which more easily gains admittance by being cloathed in the specious attire of elegant and ornamental Language.

WE learn, that in the early Ages of Christianity the external Rites of Divine Worship were in some degree adapted to the genius and disposition of those nations to whom the Gospel was preached, and that some indulgence was wisely allowed to their antient and established opinions, manners, and laws. But there are also Ordinances, whose Authority and Obligation was universal and indispensable among all Christians of whatever Age, Nation, or Sect. Of these one of the principal was the Observance of the Lord's Day. Strange indeed it is, that an institution so universally received, and acknowledged as of divine Authority, so evidently founded in Benevolence to mankind, and which, in the present state of things, seems to be the principal support of all social Religion, possibly of all Religion whatever, amongst us, should at last be objected to, and stigmatized as " a branch of that absurd system of baneful superstition introduced
" by

“by Constantine, and extended by his successors in the Civil Power
“throughout all Europe, which shall at length be utterly demolish-
“ed in fulfilment of the Gospel Prophecies.”

PERHAPS it may not be thought unseasonable to employ the opportunity which the present occasion affords, in reviewing the Grounds and Authority upon which an Institution rests, so essential to the maintenance of every Interest both civil and religious.

THE Duty of dedicating one day in seven to the purposes of religious Worship, and of abstaining on that day from secular employments, is founded upon two grand Principles, the one RITUAL and the other MORAL, the former derived from DIVINE APPOINTMENT, the latter arising from MORAL EXPEDIENCY.

* See Evanson, p. 94 and 121.

The Emperor Constantine added the sanction of an Imperial Edict to the custom which he found prevailing amongst his Christian Subjects, of observing the Sunday as a day of cessation from ordinary business; but with this exception, that he permitted them to follow the business of Husbandry on that Day, “ne occasione momenti pereat commoditas cœlesti provisione concessa.” Corp. Jur. Civil. Codic. Lib. iii. tit. 12. l. 3.

The Emperor Leo, thinking this Indulgence too general, did afterwards by a contrary Edict reverse and severely censure the remissness of his Predecessor. “We ordain, says he, according to the true meaning of the Holy Ghost, and of the Apostles thereby directed, that on the sacred day, wherein our own Integrity was restored, all do rest and surcease labour,

“that neither Husbandman, nor other, on that day, put their hands to forbidden works. “For if the Jews did so much reverence their Sabbath, which was but a shadow of ours, are not we which inhabit the Light and Truth of Grace, bound to honour that day which the Lord Himself hath honoured, and hath therein delivered us both from dishonour and death? Are we not bound to keep it singular and inviolable, well contenting ourselves with so liberal a grant of rest, and not encroaching upon that one day, which God hath chosen to His own honour? Were it not wretched neglect of Religion, to make that day common, and to think we may do with it as with the rest?” Leo Constitut. 54. See this Edict quoted by Hooker Eccles. Pol. B. v. Sect. 71.

Bv

By preserving, as we review this Subject, a clear distinction between the RITUAL and the MORAL part of the Institution; it will easily be discerned in what respects the Sabbath would of course cease with the abolition of the Jewish Polity, and in what respects it would still continue in force.

IN the second Chapter of Genesis we read, that, "*On the Seventh Day God ended His work, which He had made: and He rested on the Seventh Day from all His work which He had made: And God blessed the Seventh Day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made^d.*" What can we understand less from these words, than, that the Creator, having completed the work of Creation in six days, ordained that the Seventh Day, and each successive return of it, should be observed as a Day of religious Rest: He blessed it and sanctified it^e, that is, He *consecrated* it to the peculiar purposes of religious Worship and Meditation manifestly beneficial and advantageous to mankind. The preserving a permanent memorial, as this was, of the Creation, seems to have been the most effectual means of guarding against Idolatry, and of securing to the Creator the Worship which to Him alone is due.

NOR does there appear to be any substantial reason for supposing with some learned men that the historian in this Passage uses a Figure

C

of

^d Gen. ii. 2, 3.

^e In the Hebrew ויקדש אתו. The ideal or radical meaning of the word קדש is *Separation*, or *setting apart*; as appears from comparing Levit. xx. 24, with v. 26. and Deut. xix. 2, 7. with Josh. xx. 7. In which last passage the Septuagint renders it by *ἀποσπάζειν*, *they severed*. In like manner St. Paul, Galat. i. 15. alluding to Jerem. i. 5. translates קדש by *ἀφορίζω*, to *separate*. In an appropriate Sense קדש means καὶ ἕτοιμον to *set apart for sacred purposes, to consecrate, to sanctify*. See Parkhurst's Lexic. Heb.

of Speech, and here introduces the Institution of the Sabbath *proleptically*; “the order of Connection, and not that of Time, leading “him to mention the Sabbath, in the History of the subject which “it was ordained to commemorate^f.” On the contrary, it seems very improbable that Moses should record so important a circumstance as the Sanctification of a day to secure the Worship of the true God, which was not to be observed till upwards of two thousand years afterwards. Besides, if the reasons of God’s sanctifying the Sabbath was His resting from His works, no time could be so proper to command the observance of this Sanctification as that in which He did actually rest from all His works^g.

WHEN afterwards it pleased God to preserve one single Family amidst the general destruction of an impious World, in this Family it is reasonable to suppose that the Worship of God continued in its original purity. We are told that “*Noah walked with God*,” which expression must imply that he was a devout Observer of the Laws of God, and consequently of the Appropriation of the Seventh Day to religious Uses. There are indeed evident traces of Noah’s expecting some peculiar blessings on that day, in his observing an interval of seven days between each time of his sending out the dove. And that the same religious regard to the Seventh Day was preserved through that Line of Patriarchs, with whom God repeatedly renewed his Covenant, although not expressly mentioned by Moses in his History, it should seem, may be presumed upon the fairest grounds.

THAT the Sabbath was an ordinance already known among the
Israelites,

^f See Paley’s Mor. and Pol. Philosophy, batical Institutions.
B. v. c. 6, on the Scripture Account of Sab- ^g See Chandler’s Sermon on Gen. ii. 2, 3.

Israelites, before the Delivery of the Decalogue, appears from the manner in which it is mentioned upon the occasion of the miraculous Gift of Manna in the Wilderness. "*This is that which the Lord hath said, tomorrow is the rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the Lord^h.*" These words do not seem to imply the primary Appointment of an Institution hitherto unknown, but to be rather intended to remind the Israelites of a Duty, some tradition at least of which had remained, although during their bondage in Ægypt the observance of it had been interrupted.

Soon afterwards the Sabbath was reappointed by the mouth of the Almighty Himself from Mount Sinai, with a still greater degree of ceremonial strictness. [It may be observed here, in opposition to the opinion of those who contend that this Ordinance was first established in the Wilderness, and consequently related to the Jewish People only, that in the fourth Commandment (as well as in the passage which I have just now considered) there appears to be clearly an allusion to an Ordinance already established. The opening of the Commandment, "*Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day,*" seems to imply the prior existence of it.—Recollect, call to Remembrance a Duty which has been neglected:—return to the observance of an Ordinance which the circumstances of your residence in Ægypt did not allow you to observe. Add too, that the conclusion of the Commandment is plainly narrative, and very nearly repeats the words of Genesisⁱ, relating as matter of fact the Institution of this Rite at the time to which Moses had at first fixed it, or rather did fix it, when he afterwards composed the History of these Events.]

It is farther remarkable, that, at the renewal of this Institution

to

^h Exod. xvi. 23.

ⁱ Gen. ii. 2, 3.

to the Jewish People^k, we find an additional reason given for the observance of the Sabbath, viz. That they might commemorate by frequent periodical returns of religious Solemnity, their Deliverance from the Ægyptian Bondage, which Deliverance was to them a new Creation. This, however, was evidently not the leading design of the Institution, but a still farther and secondary use affixed to it, and applicable to the Jewish Nation alone. So again in Exodus^l, God ordains the Sabbath to be a Sign or distinguishing Mark between Him and the Israelites, to shew what God they served and worshipped. But this no more implies that the Sabbath had not been before instituted, than God's appointment or designation of the Rainbow to be "a Token of His Covenant"^m, makes it necessary for us to believe that it had not before existed, being a natural effect of natural causesⁿ.

FROM hence we may collect, that the Jewish Sabbath was in part adapted to the peculiar circumstances of that people, and being in part founded in the nature and unchangeable Reason of Things, was in this latter respect of eternal obligation to all Worshippers of the true and supreme God under every religious Dispensation whatever. With regard to the Rest commanded to be observed at the renewal of this Institution to the Jews; this was also partly Ceremonial and partly Moral. It was Ceremonial, and so far peculiarly relative to the Jews, in as much as by enjoining them to allow Rest to their Slaves, it served as a becoming Memorial of their having once been Slaves themselves in the Land of Ægypt. But, so far as the Commandment, inculcates a lesson of Benevolence and Humanity, and tends to discountenance Cruelty, Severity, and Rigour towards Man

^k Deut. v. 14.

^l Exod. xxxi. 13.

^m Gen. ix. 13.

ⁿ See Bp. Warburton's Div. Leg. b. iv. sect. 5.
and

and Beast, in this respect it partakes of that Moral Law, which must continue to be of perpetual and universal Obligation.

THE Jewish Sabbath being partly ceremonial and partly moral, the ceremonial part of it, as far as it respected the particular circumstances of the Jewish Nation, ceased of course when the Mosaic Dispensation was superseded by that of Christ. But the moral part of it, the obligation to observe a fixed day returning at certain intervals, appropriated to religious purposes, being not confined to the Jews, continued still in its original force.

THE Christian Religion therefore, although, strictly speaking, it discharged us from the obligation of the Jewish Sabbath, so far as it was a part of their *Ritual Establishment*, yet most certainly substituted a Christian Sabbath, a day of religious Rest and Devotion in its room. It is equally necessary for Christians as well as Jews, that some certain day should be dedicated to religious Worship and Instruction: and it concerns us equally with them to remember and celebrate the Almighty's Power and Goodness in the Creation of the World. So far therefore as the original Institution appoints a *seventh* day rather than any other for religious uses it doubtless obliges us as well as it did the Israelites. The Deliverance of the Israelites from their Ægyptian Bondage was indeed a type of the much greater deliverance by which our Saviour redeemed the World from the Bondage of Sin and Death. Hence the very discontinuance of the former reason immediately suggested another infinitely stronger to succeed in its place. Our blessed Lord was, as he styled himself "*Lord of the Sabbath*;" that is, He had authority to make any alterations in it he saw proper. And there can be little doubt, but that by his authority

rity the Apostles, immediately after their Divine Master's Ascension, did so far alter it as to change the day from the *Seventh* to the *First* day of the week, calling it no longer the Sabbath but the LORD'S DAY°. That as the former Sabbath commemorated the Deliverance of the Jews from their Ægyptian Bonds, the Christian Sabbath might preserve a continual remembrance of the greater and universal deliverance of Mankind from the Bondage of Sin and Punishment. And this deliverance being completed and confirmed by our Lord's Resurrection from the Dead, which took place on the first Day of the Week, this circumstance rendered that Day everlastingly memorable and glorious^p.

[OUR Saviour himself expressly declares that the Moral Duties of the Religion which he taught differed in no other respect from those of the Jewish Law than in being enlarged and improved. "*Think not,*" says he, "*That I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.*" Consistently with this gracious Design, we see our Lord taking frequent occasion to instill into the minds of his Disciples more just and liberal notions of the Duty of the Sabbath; blaming the Jews themselves for interpreting the Laws relative to it in so unreasonable and extravagant a degree of Strictness. When the Pharisees, for instance, accused his Disciples of

° At the same time there is a great degree of Probability in the supposition that the Apostles by this Alteration recalled and reappointed the original Sabbath: the seventh day of the Creation, on which God rested from His works, being the first day of Adam's first Heptomade. See Chandler's Sermon on Gen. ii. 2, 3. and Bedford's Scriptural Chronology.

^p Vide St. Ignatii interpol. Epistol. ad Magnesianos. Sect. 9.

Και μετα το σαδδαισαι, ιορλαζειω πας φιλοχριστος την κυριακην, την αναστασιμον, την βασιλιδα, την υπαι- τον πασων των ημερων. ην περιμενων ο προφητης ελε- γεν, Εις το τελος, υπερ της υγδους. εν η και η ζωη ημων ανετειλε, και του θανατου γεγνε νικη εν Χριστω. See also the Notes of Cotelerius upon this passage.

^r Matt. v. 17.

of breaking the Sabbath by plucking some ears of corn on that day, he reprov'd their scrupulousness, and justified his Disciples in moderately satisfying the calls of Nature, alleging that "*the Sabbath was made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath*." Meaning that the Sabbath was not intended to forbid the moderate gratification of the Appetites, nor even such innocent Indulgences as did not oppose or interfere with the Duties of the Day. And the authority he urged for what he taught was indisputable; "*The Son of Man,*" said he, "*is Lord also of the Sabbath*."

UPON various other occasions, to the License he thus gave for works of Necessity, we find our Saviour adding the suitableness of works of Charity and Benevolence to the true Design of the Sabbath. A very striking instance of this presents itself to our notice in our Saviour's restoring the infirm man at the Pool of Bethesda to his strength on the Sabbath Day, and commanding him to "*take up his bed and walk*." This assumed power of our Lord over the Sabbath may be considered as a kind of prelude to that alteration which was soon to be introduced. He upon this occasion exerted His Authority over that branch of the Jewish Law, and thus pre-

^s Mar. ii. 27. ^t Mar. ii. 28.

^u John v. 8. Vide Lightfoot. Horæ Hebraicæ In Evang. Joan. Cap. viii. v. 9. Edit. Roterodamens. 1686, Tom. ii. p. 622.

— Sed quid de rebus istis loquimur; cum Canonibus Scribarum prohibitum fuerit res minutissimi ponderis portare Sabbato: adeo ut planè contra istos Canones foret, grabatum ferre huc illuc in porticu, multo magis e porticu in plateas. Animadversionem ergo me-

retur, quod Salvator non satis duxerit infirmum hunc sanare Sabbato, quod contra canones; sed et quòd grabatum portare imperaret, quod multo magis contrarium. Unde videtur planè, quod Christus apud se statuerit, vel hominis hujus fidem et obedientiam planè experiri, vel Sabbatum Judaicum brevi temporis spatio cardinibus suis dimovendum jam apertè quassare, vel utrumque.

pared

pared the Jews for that total abolition of their Sabbath which was in a short time afterwards to take place^w.]

IT may indeed be objected that no express injunction to observe the Lord's Day is to be found in the New Testament; but this objection will appear to have little weight, when it is considered, that the Practice of the Apostles and immediate Disciples of our Saviour is a sufficient Authority to justify, and indeed command our observance of it, as being the practice of Persons either acting under their Divine Master's immediate direction, or under the especial Influence of the Holy Spirit, which was "*to teach them all things, and to guide them into all Truth*." Doubtless He alone could claim the right to make any change in the Sabbath, whether by His own express Command, or by the Instrumentality of His Apostles, who was, as He declared Himself to be, "*the Lord of the Sabbath*." We may farther observe that our Saviour confirmed and strengthened the observance of the *first* day of the week in the place of the Jewish Sabbath, by frequent Revelations of Himself after His Resurrection to His Apostles and Disciples on that particular Day. And at length a still further mark of Dignity was annexed to it, by that wonderful event, the visible Descent of the Holy Spirit at the Feast of Pentecost.

^w Nemo tamen existimavit Christi mandatum eò spectasse ut contemneretur Sabbatum, quatenus dies quietis erat; aut ut mandatum de consecrando eo die Domino, flocci fieret; sed Sabbatum in alium diem commutaturus erat, vique equalis cum Patre potestatis, finito Redemptionis opere, novum Sabbatum introducturus erat, ut Pater finitâ Creatione vetus constituerat. Quasi itaque huic mutationi

præluderet, factum a se mandatum divinæ auctoritatis suæ argumento tueretur, (ὁ πατήρ με εἰς αἰῶνα ἐργαζέσθαι, καὶ γὰρ ἐργαζομαι. κ. τ. λ. Joan. c. v. 17.) diemque jam veluti concutere incipit, qui intra biennium loco quodammodo mutandus erat. Divinæ institutionis Sabbati Christiani hic inchoari probatio poterit. Vide Lightfoot. Harmon. quat. Evangelist. part. 3. Tom. i. p. 536.

^x Joh. xvi. 13.

To

To enumerate the various passages in the New Testament, which shew the constant attention of the Apostles to this Duty would be unnecessary. There is however one passage in the Acts of the Apostles which so fully and indisputably proves the point in question that it must not be omitted. It is there said that "*upon the first Day of the Week, when the Disciples came together to break Bread, Paul preached to them* ¹." We may here observe, First, that St. Luke mentions the assembling together of the Disciples as an established custom: he does not say that they were summoned together, but that, on the first day of the week, the Disciples *were assembled together*. Secondly, that one principal object of their meeting was to celebrate the Holy Sacrament, which, in this early Age of Christianity, was constantly one part of the Duty of the Lord's Day². Thirdly, that another purpose of their meeting was for the benefit of Public Instruction;—" *St Paul preached unto them*." From hence it evidently appears that the first day of the week, called by St. John in the Apocalypse "*the Lord's Day* ³," was in the time of the Apostles appropriated to the purposes of Social Worship and Religious Instruction.

WHOEVER examines with candour the Christian Writers of the three first centuries, and particularly *Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and*
D
Eusebius,

¹ Acts xx. 7.

² See Whitby upon Acts xx. 7.

³ Apoc. i. 10. Ubi Johannes dicit se raptum fuisse in spiritu die Dominico, non sanè Sabbato Judæorum, quod proculdubio nominasset, non aliquò tantum die septimanæ, quia sic ambignus esset titulus, ad implicandum potius quam explicandum comparatus, sed die illo quo Christus resurrexerat, quo convenire solebant Apostoli ad sacra peragenda et quo

Paulus ordinaverat collectas habendas, (1 Cor. xvi. 2.) prout moris erat in primitivâ Ecclesiâ. Cum ergo de die illâ tanquam notâ et in Ecclesiâ usitatâ loquatur, dubium non est, quin ex recepto Ecclesiæ usu hoc nomine insignita sit, quis enim aliàs Christianorum intellexisset quid Johannes hâc appellatione significasset, si quam aliam diem designare voluisset. Turretini Theolog. Vol. ii. Quæst. xiii. ad præceptum quartum.

Eusebius^b, will be convinced that the Lord's Day was observed by the Christians of the primitive Churches as an high and solemn Festival; that it was dedicated by them to the sole and exclusive purposes of Religion, and that, in order to insure a more serious and regular attendance upon public Worship, all secular employments, and in short all Works, except those of Charity and Necessity were suspended. It appears from the well-known Epistle of *Pliny* to the Emperor Trajan^c, that the observance of the Lord's Day in the manner here described, was continued with as much regularity as the frequent Persecutions of the Church would permit. In short, that, although in the different Churches different Ceremonies were afterwards adopted, yet, in the uniform observance of the Lord's Day Christians of every nation and sect have invariably agreed.

IT may not be improper to say something farther on the MORAL NECESSITY, or HIGH EXPEDIENCY of what we will now venture to call the Christian Institution of the Lord's Day. Every one will admit, that the Almighty did not institute the Sabbath as a mere Rite, as an ordinance indifferent in itself, or that contained nothing of Propriety or Obligation beyond the mere positive Command; but that He did it with a View to the Moral Necessity of Man's appropriating some particular and stated portion of time to a more than usual attendance upon Religious Duties. God hath himself chosen and appointed a *seventh* part for this purpose, and it therefore becomes us to

^b Vide Justini Martyris Apologet. secund. 18, 19. Orat. de Laud. Constant. pag. 628. sub finem. Τη του ηλιου λεγομενη ημερα παντων
κατα πολεις η αγρους μενοντων συνελευσεις γινεσθαι. κ.τ.λ.
Tertullian. Apologet. cap. 7. 38 and 39. De Idololatriâ cap. xiv. Eusebii Hist. Eccles. Lib. iv. c. 23. De Vita Constantini Lib. iv. cap.

18, 19. Orat. de Laud. Constant. pag. 628. Edit. Valesii, Moguntiae, 1672.

^c See Pliny's Lib. x. Epist. 97. (Carmenque Christo, quasi Deo, dicere secum invicem, &c.) compared with St. Mark xiv. 26.

conclude

conclude that a seventh part is the best and most convenient proportion that could be chosen. Christian Piety is not only a necessary qualification for our future Happiness, but has besides a very high degree of influence upon our temporal Welfare. "*Godliness*," says St. Paul, "*is profitable unto all things, having the promise of this life that now is, and of that which is to come*^d." The principal means or instrument by which a sense of religious Duty is impressed upon the minds of Men is Public Worship, which affords an opportunity of diffusing religious and moral Knowledge among all ranks of Christians, many of whom, it is to be feared, would otherwise continue in a state of Ignorance and Indifference. The propriety therefore, nay the necessity, of appropriating a regular portion of time to religious Exercises must have ever been obvious to reason; and the choice of *a seventh day*, admitting the motive of its selection, viz. to continue the memory of our Creation and Redemption, must have ever approved itself to the understandings of all considerate Men.

And yet, as if there were no weight in the many powerful reasons alleged for the Divine Authority of this Ordinance, traced from the very beginning of the World down to the present Establishment, there are those who scruple not to treat it as a mere speculative point, to be freely discussed like any common measure of human Prudence, and to argue against it as a Device not only fraught with Impolicy, but even injurious to those ends of Piety and Virtue for which it was professedly designed. If the Institution be of God, attempts to overthrow it will be vain: it behoves those who make them to beware "*lest haply they be found to fight against God*^e." It is only on account of the ill effect such arguments may have upon weak minds that their futility deserves to be exposed.

^d 1 Tim. iv. 8.

^e Acts v. 39.

It has lately been advanced as one bad consequence of the Christian Sabbath, that "it annihilates one seventh part of the National "Industry". Now it seems most probable that all employments, and especially the more laborious ones, are more regularly and effectually carried on with this interval of relaxation, than they would be without it. Since some intervals of refreshment must be allowed to be absolutely necessary, it follows, that if there were no stated day of exemption from Labour, each Individual would chuse for himself the time best suited to his own convenience, a consequence which cannot fail to be highly injurious to the Public Interest.

AGAIN, it is objected, that "the religious observance of Sunday as "a day of cessation from all worldly business, induces a very large majority of the most useful and most numerous part of the people to "mispend that seventh of their time in Dissipation and Intemperance, "which too naturally and certainly leads them to vicious Immoralities and to crimes of every degree". That people in general were more regularly attentive to the Duties of the Day, is what every good Man must wish; but for any one to assert that the Dissipation that too generally prevails is the necessary consequence of the Institution, is surely a very unfair deduction. For how little probability is there that those who are accustomed to spend their Sundays in Idleness, Intemperance, and Debauchery, would not find some other time for indulging their vicious Propensities. Christianity affords all men an opportunity of "*growing wise unto Salvation*:" if, by absenting themselves from Public Worship, they gradually contract an indifference to every religious Sentiment, and a contempt for every thing that concerns their future state, this unhappy consequence is surely not to be charged upon the Ordinance itself, but upon their own inconsiderate conduct.

† See Evanfon, p. 81.

‡ See Evanfon, p. 14.

conduct. To affirm that Impiety and Irreligion are necessarily and unavoidably occasioned by an Institution which holds forth religious Instruction to every one who is disposed to receive it, is to attribute consequences to the Institution itself, which are evidently produced by the Abuse and Neglect of it. If people were not provided with the Leisure and Opportunity which the Lord's Day affords, how and when would they be brought together for the purposes of public Devotion or Instruction?

BUT the Author of the objections which we have now considered, proceeds still further, and denies that "the assembling together for the purpose of public Worship is a Duty of the Gospel;" and thinks that "an Hour at a time in an Evening twice or thrice a Week employed in explaining the New Testament would be a more beneficial mode of communicating religious Instruction^h." With respect to the Duty of Public Worship, I shall only here observe, that Public and Private Prayer are Duties distinct from each other, and both equally necessary, equally enjoined by the Gospel, equally sanctioned by the practice of our Saviour and His Apostles, and uniformly observed by devout Christians in all ages of the Church. The same Lord Jesus Christ who said, "*when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut to the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret*ⁱ," has also encouraged His Disciples to the Duty of Public Prayer by a promise of extraordinary Blessings: "*where two or three,*" says he, "*are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them*^k." The same great Teacher of our Religion who "*who went apart into the mountain to pray*^l," was also Himself a constant frequenter of places of Public Worship; "*as His custom was,*" says St. Luke,

^h See Evanfon, p. 25 and 26. ⁱ Matt. vi. 6. ^k Matt. xviii. 20. ^l Matt. xiv. 23.

Luke, "*He went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath^m.*" Each mode of Worship has its peculiar use; the obligation therefore to one does not supersede that to the other: we are to pray in private, because then, if ever, our Prayers are devoid of Hypocrisy; we are to pray in public, because by so doing we honour and glorify God, and at the same time give a public testimony of our inward Piety: "*our Light shines forth before Menⁿ,*" and tacitly exhorts them to follow our good example.

As to public Instruction, it is argued, that, "the dedicating an hour in an evening twice or thrice a week to the purpose of explaining the New Testament would be of infinitely greater use than the present mode of religious Instruction^o." When we observe with regret how frequently Men in all ranks of Life, suffer the most trivial excuses to prevent their attendance upon public Worship, what little encouragement have we to expect that they would not suffer some secular pursuit, some urgent business, or some favourite amusement to engross the evening hour which was to be dedicated to religious Instruction. How few are there, generally speaking, who have themselves the qualifications requisite for instructing their families upon many points of Religion, and how few, in comparison, to the disgrace of the present age be it said, would have the inclination. Hence the stock of religious Knowledge would be quickly diminished, and those, who have now constant opportunities of recalling to their minds a sense of their Duty towards God and their Fellow-creatures, would too probably, by being deprived of the frequent returns of periodical Worship, gradually become indifferent to that Piety which is so essential to their present and future happiness.

AFTER

^m Luke iv. 16.

ⁿ Matt. v. 16.

^o See Evanfon, p. 26.

AFTER a fair and candid examination of the Arguments which have lately been advanced against the Institution of the Lord's Day, we shall find that none of them are such as ought to have any influence upon us as dependent Beings, or as Christians. On the contrary, it is most evident, that, by means of the Lord's Day, Piety, Virtue, and religious Instruction are especially promoted and diffused through all ranks of Men, and that it conduces more to the increase of civilization and good manners than any other measure which we can think of to substitute in its stead. By it the exercise of social Devotion, and the fulfilment of our Saviour's injunctions respecting the regular participation of the Lord's Supper, are as far as possible secured. And the universality of the Rest enjoined upon this Day, including our servants, and even cattle, teaches Mankind a continual Lesson of Mercy and Charity, and is admirably calculated to remind us of that Humanity and Tendernefs, which it is unquestionably a Christian Duty to shew at all times towards those useful creatures with which the Goodness of God hath furnished us.

SUCH are the beneficial effects resulting from the Observance of this Ordinance: if, through that Lukewarmness in Religion, which unhappily too much prevails amongst us, these effects are not so general as we could wish they were, this very abuse, so far from being a reason for attributing injurious Consequences to the Institution, is the strongest motive possible to us support it in all the Honour and Reverence to which it is so justly entitled; and to employ all the means in our power to recover men to a due regard for an Ordinance so plainly obligatory from the express Designation of God, and also from its extreme Importance and Utility in supporting the Spirit of Christianity, by leading Men into habitual Virtue and Holiness of
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Life here, in order to secure to them the Blessings of eternal Happiness hereafter^p.

LET us then who bear the *honourable* Title of "*Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God*"; endeavour to support by precept and example this Holy Institution. Let us watch over it, and maintain it as a kind of Palladium, the Loss of which from amongst us would, in all human probability, eventually endanger the Loss of Christianity itself. Happy would it be for the Nation, if the legal Provisions made by the Civil Powers for the devout observance of the Day were more strenuously enforced: but far happier, if those persons whom Providence has placed in high and conspicuous stations would add the powerful influence of their Practice and Example. We may however be assured that, the greater the Difficulties, the more numerous and powerful the Obstacles against which we have to contend, the brighter will be the Glory attending our Success, whatever that may be, and the higher will be our Reward, from that Master in whose cause we labour. At all events, this consideration alone ought to afford us ample encouragement to persevere with unremitting Ardour and Industry in the great and important Work in which we are all engaged: that, whatever may be the actual Success of our exertions, the Reward, which we humbly hope one day to receive at the Hands of our Heavenly Father, will be proportioned, not to the degree of that Success, but to the Sincerity of our endeavours.

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^p In the strong and expressive language of Hooker. "Well to celebrate these Religious and Sacred Days, is to spend the flower of our time happily. They are the Splendor and outward Dignity of our Religion, forcible Witnesses of ancient Truth, Provocations to the exercises of all piety, Shadows

"of our endless Felicity in Heaven, on Earth
"everlasting Records and Memorials; where-
"in they which cannot be drawn to hearken
"unto that we teach, may only by looking
"upon that we do in a manner read whatso-
"ever we believe." Hooker's Eccles. Pol.
B. 5. c. 71. 1 Cor. iv. 1.

